

**In The Claims:**

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): An athletic training device for use in blocking balls, comprising:

a front layer intended to contact a hit ball;

a rear layer, which is intended to absorb force transmitted to said front layer, said rear layer having a top portion and a base portion that is distal to said top portion;

an insert portion disposed between and secured to each of said front layer and said rear layer, said insert portion being comprised of a relatively stiff material; and

a hand receiving portion to allow receipt of a user's hand therein,[[;]] said hand receiving portion being smaller than said front layer, said hand receiving portion covering a substantial portion of said user's hand to maintain it in a generally fixed position, said hand receiving portion having a front palm side that is fixedly mated to said rear layer;

whereby said hand receiving portion extends from said base portion of said rear layer, is attached to a base portion of said outer covering,

Claim 2 (Cancelled)

Claim 3 (Original): The training device of claim 2, wherein said insert portion is comprised of a plastic material.

Claim 4 (Original): The training device of claim 2, wherein said front layer and said rear layer are comprised of a foam material.

Claim 5 (Original): The training device of claim 4, wherein said rear foam layer is thicker than said front foam layer.

Claim 6 (Original): The training device of claim 2, wherein said insert portion is designed to provide some flexibility, but is stiff enough to prevent the ball from consistently passing over or through the training device.

Claim 7 (Original): The training device of claim 1, wherein said insert portion is glued to said front layer on one side and is glued to said rear layer on the other side.

Claim 8 (Original): The training device of claim 4, further comprising:  
a covering surrounding said front foam layer, said insert portion, and said rear foam layer.

Claim 9 (Original): The training device of claim 8, wherein said covering is comprised of a fabric material.

Claim 10 (Original): The training device of claim 1, wherein said hand receiving portion is configured in the shape of a glove.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A volleyball blocking pad, comprising:  
a foam portion;  
a relatively stiff portion disposed in said foam portion;  
an outer covering encapsulating said foam portion; and  
a hand receiving portion secured to said outer covering, said hand receiving portion being smaller than said foam portion, said hand receiving portion having a front palm side that is fixedly mated to a rear side of said outer covering, said hand receiving portion including a plurality of sleeves for receiving a plurality of fingers;

whereby said hand receiving portion is attached to a base portion of said rear side, ~~said outer covering~~;

whereby said outer covering further includes a top portion that is distal to said base portion, at least said top portion deforming when the volleyball blocking pad is contacted by a volleyball so as to minimize a torque applied to a user's wrist.

Claim 12 (Original): The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said foam portion is comprised of a front foam portion and a rear foam portion.

Claim 13 (Original): The blocking pad of claim 12, wherein said relatively stiff portion is disposed between said front foam portion and said rear foam portion.

Claim 14 (Original): The blocking pad of claim 12, wherein said front foam portion is thinner than said rear foam portion.

Claim 15 (Original): The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said relatively stiff portion is comprised of a plastic material that also provides some flexibility.

Claim 16 (Original): The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said outer covering is removable.

Claim 17 (Original): The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said hand receiving portion is configured in the shape of a glove.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): A volleyball blocking pad, comprising:  
an absorbing portion for absorbing some force of a contacting volleyball;  
a relatively stiff portion in communication with said absorbing portion to allow said blocking pad to block said contacting ball, but still flex slightly backward with respect to a user's hand; and

a hand portion in communication therewith for receipt of said user's hand therein, said hand receiving portion having a front palm side that is fixedly mated to a rear side of said outer covering, said hand receiving portion including a plurality of sleeves for receiving a plurality of fingers;

whereby said hand receiving portion extends from a base portion of said rear side.  
~~is attached to a base portion of said outer covering.~~